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Box 5 File 12

COHIST

HISTORY OF MOREHEAD

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COHIST

Morehead is located on U.S. Route 60 and the C&O Railroad. It has a number of feeder highways that makes it a Hub for much of the surrounding areas. Only one other county seat of adjoining counties has a railroad. This gives Morehead the distinction of being a shipping center and its location mid-point between Ashland and Lexington each seventy miles away gives Morehead a large trading area.

To the casual observer Morehead appears to be overcrowded with businesses. However bank deposits, electrical consumption and other data prove differently. The trading area has a population of approximately 50,000 people with incomes from mining, manufacturing, agriculture, lumbering and educational institutions. There is still needed a number of specialty stores.

The potential for additional manufacturing of clay, wood, stone, cement and glass is unlimited. These industries could be self-sustaining because there is plenty of raw materials to support them. When the time comes that all these natural resources are being used the wealth of the town and country will swell where once it was said that nothing would flourish but "Hell and Christmas Trees".

Early settlers in this region came for various reasons but the natural resources were the dominating factors. The area that is now Rowan and adjoining counties were densely

forested with virgin hardwoods. Rich level farm land was practically non-existent. The lack of navigable streams and the existence of many hills ranging into steep rugged mountains gave the area a pioneer and rugged atmosphere long after surrounding territories were permanently settled. Licking river was the only means of transportation and the first few settlements in Rowan county had a life similar to the river front towns of the Ohio. Many of the old names along the river tell a legend within themselves.

Rowan county is situated in the north east part of the state. It was the 104th political subdivision to be created within the commonwealth, having been formed in 1856 from portions of Morgan and Fleming counties. It was named in honor of Judge John Rowan. He was judge of Kentucky Court of Appeals and an eminent statesman. John Rowan lived at Bardstown and his home has been designated "The Old Kentucky Home" because it was there that Stephen Foster, while on a visit wrote the most popular melody ever written, "The Old Kentucky Home".

When Rowan became a county, Morehead was designated as the county seat and named for honorable James T. Morehead who had been Governor and Senator. The town was located on the land of Mrs. Oxley who donated the present public square. Just thirteen years after becoming the county seat of the

new county, Morehead grew to a population of 200 and was incorporated in 1869. Besides the courthouse and several residential buildings the commercial and professional people consisted of the following: two general stores, one blacksmith shop, one saw mill, one doctor, one lawyer and two churches. The courthouse was built in 1899 in the Victorian style which was popular at that time.

One of the oldest land marks in Morehead is the Parsonage of the Baptist church. A part of this house was built about a hundred years ago. The present structure was built onto a log cabin.

Farmers, located on the river had many more stores, saloons, large lumbering operations and a population of 600.

The virgin forests were the first natural resources to attract eastern capital. The operations were large enough that the Morehead and North Fork railroad was constructed to handle the great volume of logs that were being processed at near by Clearfield, named after Clearfield Pa., the home office of the lumber company. This large lumbering operation continued until the Morehead and North Fork railroad penetrated deep into Morgan county. Morehead was the business center and frontier town for all the extensive lumbering operations and for a time looked like it would be doomed like the rest of the logging camps as the timber was used up. The financial

interests weren't too anxious to close up the railroad that had cost a fortune to build and began to look for other uses of the railroad.

The clay deposits in the county were analyzed and found to be extensive and satisfactory for fire clays and sewer tiles. The clay deposits gave rise to the Lee Clay Products Company at Clearfield. In 1923 the original company was reorganized for the purpose of developing the clay products produced there to-day. By the year of 1925 the Lee Clay Products Company had gotten under way and the first carload of products was shipped in January 1927. The community had grown from a few scattered farm houses in 1907 to thirty five homes. The company purchased these homes from their owners. At the present time the community has a population of approximately 1,000 and the plant employs 150 people. The Clearfield Supply Company owns and operates the Morehead and North Fork Railroad for the purpose of transporting the clay from the pits to the plant.

The clay deposits also gave rise to the L.P. Halderman Fire Brick Company at Halderman, which had its beginning in 1902. W.A. Connley was the leading person in the construction of the project and it was first known as the Louisville and Portsmouth Brickyard. Mr. Connley later willed the plant to his son-in-law L.P. Halderman. From that time the plant became known as the Halderman Brickyard and the community now bears the name Halderman. Mr. Halderman played a very imp-

ortant role in the progress of the community. He made it possible for the building of the first school in Halderman. The company furnished the brick for the project and later another building was constructed for the lower grades. When the brickyard was at peak production, about 350 men were employed there. The community had a look of prosperity with a small park and well-groomed buildings and grounds. There was a large company owned store where almost anything could be purchased. Three brick homes still stand as monuments to this period of prosperity. The remaining population of approximately 225 are now housed in frame buildings with available electricity and running water. About four years after the death of Mr. Halderman in 1942 the brickyard was sold to the General Refractories Corporation. A change in the policies and certain labor problems has curtailed the operation of the plant to its present payroll of about 140.

These two companies gave a new life to Morehead. They meant huge investments and much work to the needy community.

Without question, the greatest single factor in the development of Morehead was the establishment of a four year State College in 1923 on the site of the old Morehead Normal School. State Senator Allie Young was very influential in getting the school located in Morehead and one of the buildings on the campus bears his name. The Morehead Normal

school opened in Morehead in 1887 with Dr. Frank C. Button as the first president. This was the year that the Martin-Tolliver feud was raging in this section. In fact one of the reasons for the establishment of the Normal School was to combat, by means of education the feuding in this area. General William Temple Withers of Lexington, Kentucky helped finance the school through the state board of the Christian church. And the honorable T.F. Hargis of Louisville, Kentucky provided for the first school house and the grounds for all the buildings. A gift from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hodson of Oquwka, Illinois afforded the basis of a fund for the erection of a boarding house.

For thirteen years the Normal school was supported by the Kentucky Christian Missionary Society and in 1900 passed into the control of the Christians Womans Board of Missions. In 1922 the school property, consisting of two dormitories, a classroom building and an administration building were deeded to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the following year the institution was reopened with less than 100 students. Dr. Button became the first president of the new institution. The M.N.S. Club of the Old Normal School has at different times tried to have one of the new buildings named in honor of Dr. Button. They have been successful in having the present auditorium named the Frank C. Button auditorium. The

formal dedication will be on June 27, 1954. The M.N.S. Club holds annual meetings and the 1953 meeting was attended by almost 100 members.

One of the buildings of the old Normal School may be seen across the street from the campus. It is owned by one of the present students on the campus and is used as a boarding house, catering only to college students.

No article about education in Morehead would be complete without a word about Cora Wilson Stewart and her famous "Moonlight Schools" that greatly helped to raise the educational standards of much of the south. The schools were so named because these early adult classes were held only on bright nights because of rough trails to be traveled. Miss Stewart was superintendent of the county school. All the teachers cooperated and made tours to all the farm houses and log cabins in this area, inviting people of all ages to attend school. On the first night 1200 people attended. The "Moon Light School", spread rapidly into surrounding counties and by the third year similar schools were being held all over Kentucky, parts of Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas. Mrs. Stewart received no compensation for her work but has been awarded many honors. To-day she is living with relatives in Joplin, Missouri. A friend who recently visited her reports she is almost blind and wants to return to Morehead once more.

Inadequate rooms on the campus when the college was young caused an unusually large number of homes to have behind them small two and three room cabins, built to rent to the students. Nearly every home boarded from one to a large number of students. The student body and the town people were very close. Many of the students paid their way through school by supplying potatoes, meat and cornmeal to some family so that they might feed more students. The building of dormitories has practically eliminated the construction of the two room cabins behind homes. However there is a large number still in use.

About 1910 Morehead got its first electrical installation. Up until this time the roads, there were no paved streets, and board sidewalks were lighted with coal oil lamps. It was the nightly duty of the only policeman to light the lamps as darkness approached. At 8:00 o'clock he would ring the curfew bell to clear the streets. After the curfew bell rang no children were allowed on the streets. The last board sidewalks were torn out about 1920.

The coming of sound movies to the theater killed a new but very promising business in Morehead. Edd Magard, an inventive genius, patented a movie projector that was revolutionary to the movie industry. Other things that Mr. Magard was responsible for were: the first electric lights,

the first ice plant and the first running water.

In the past four years Morehead has revamped its gas and water supply and done considerable work on its sewage system. The gas supply is practically unlimited with five 28" to 30" gas lines running within easy access to the town. The water supply is furnished by a new dam erected by the college.

The most disasterous thing to happen to Morehead in its 85 years was a flash flood that occurred on the night of July 4, 1939. In two hours the water in little old lazy Triplett creek rose 18 feet. The sudden rise caught every one by surprise and drowned 27 persons. All of railroad street and the west end of Main street was practically destroyed. Up to this time Railroad street was the main street in town.

Morehead has no resemblance of the town it once was. During the Civil war General Morgan and his raiders burned the only bridge in the county which was across Triplett creek near Morehead. At this point the confederate raiders and his men met and defeated a stronger union force. During the battle the courthouse was burned. Civil war activities were small compared to a battle that broke out about 1884 between two local families, the Martins and Tollivers. In one year with the entire county population less than 1000 there were twenty murders and sixteen persons wounded without a court conviction.

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John Fox, in his book "Kentuckians", gives a true picture of life in Morehead and Rowan county. The feuding days are gone, the guns are quiet but the sore has never completely healed between the two families. To-day the city and county officers are selected for their ability rather than the ones that have the most friends who can shoot the straightest.

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